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Abstract of the national paper of Tunisia

1. The opportunities and challenges presented by outer space were taken up in Tunisia at an early stage, a National Commission for Outer Space Affairs having been established shortly after the holding of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in 1982.

2. The main objectives of that Commission were:

(a) To propose a national policy for the peaceful uses of outer space;

(b) To coordinate the activities of the various ministerial departments and organizations concerned with space applications and technology;

(c) To generate media and public awareness of the spin-off benefits of space for the country's scientific and socio-economic development.

3. The activities undertaken by the Commission between 1984 and 1987 led to the establishment of the National Remote Sensing Centre in 1988.

4. With a view to the acquisition of space technology, the State Secretariat for Scientific Research and Technology has carried out a number of activities since 1992, including in particular:

(a) The reactivation and revitalization of the National Commission for Outer Space Affairs in 1993, with a new composition and redefined operational modalities;

(b) The establishment of international cooperation links for the purpose of developing skills through training in space and aeronautical techniques and instruction in space technology applications;

(c) The setting up, at the Regional Institute for Computer Sciences and Telecommunications, of a space unit responsible for coordinating the activities of the various institutions involved in the sector (the National Institute of Meteorology, National Telecommunications Centre, the Arab Satellite Communications Organization, universities, etc.);

(d) The organization of awareness seminars on space issues, applications and technologies.

5. At the instigation of the State Secretariat for Scientific Research and Technology, the activities of the National Commission for Outer Space Affairs have been taken into account in the country's five-year development plans in the form of a National Space Programme.

6. The execution of this Programme has made it possible:

(a) To utilize space resources in providing various services, such as telecommunications, meteorology and remote sensing;

(b) To establish the necessary infrastructure and organizations to benefit from space-related applications;

(c) To create a pool of skills and expertise in space techniques and technologies;

(d) To contribute, at the regional and international levels, to the development of mutually beneficial space applications and to establish cooperation links with specialized centres and organizations.

7. On the basis of the capabilities acquired, which will be maintained and continuously developed, Tunisia will take steps to promote the exchange of experiences in space science and technology between developing countries and developed countries, and hopes that the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) will give rise to actions making it possible further to promote the applications of space technology in the developing countries in order to reduce the disparity in standards and advancement in relation to the developed countries.